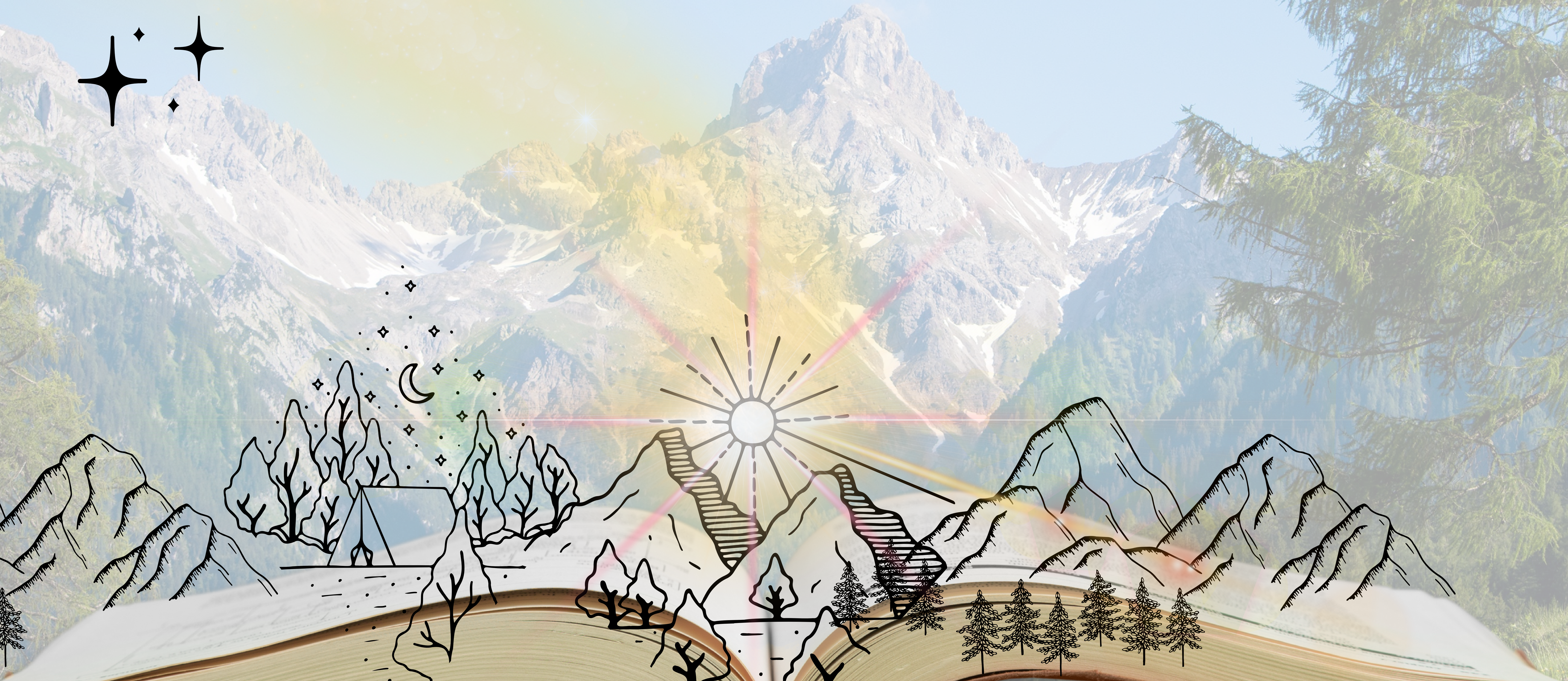
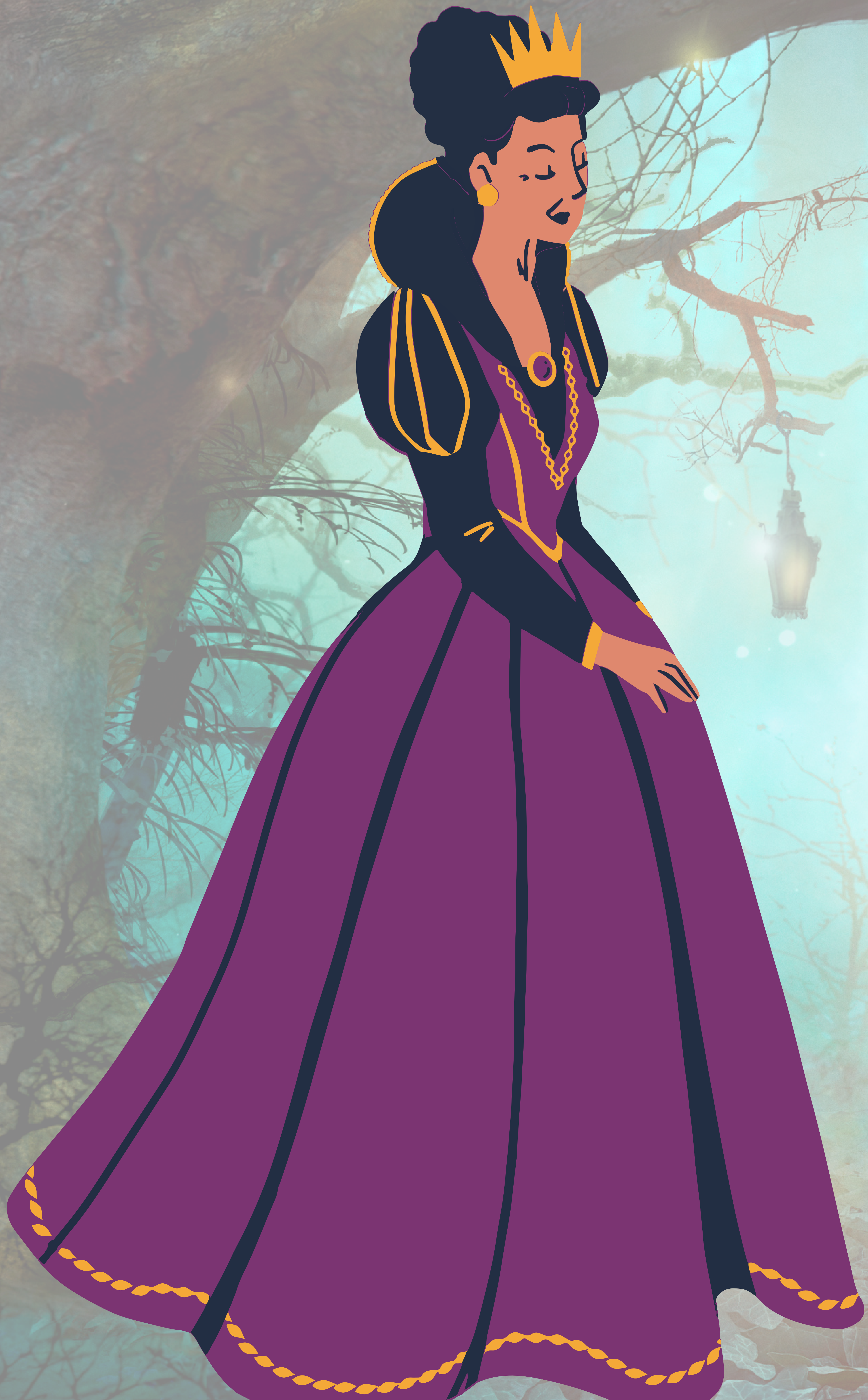
The Legend of Mt. Malindig

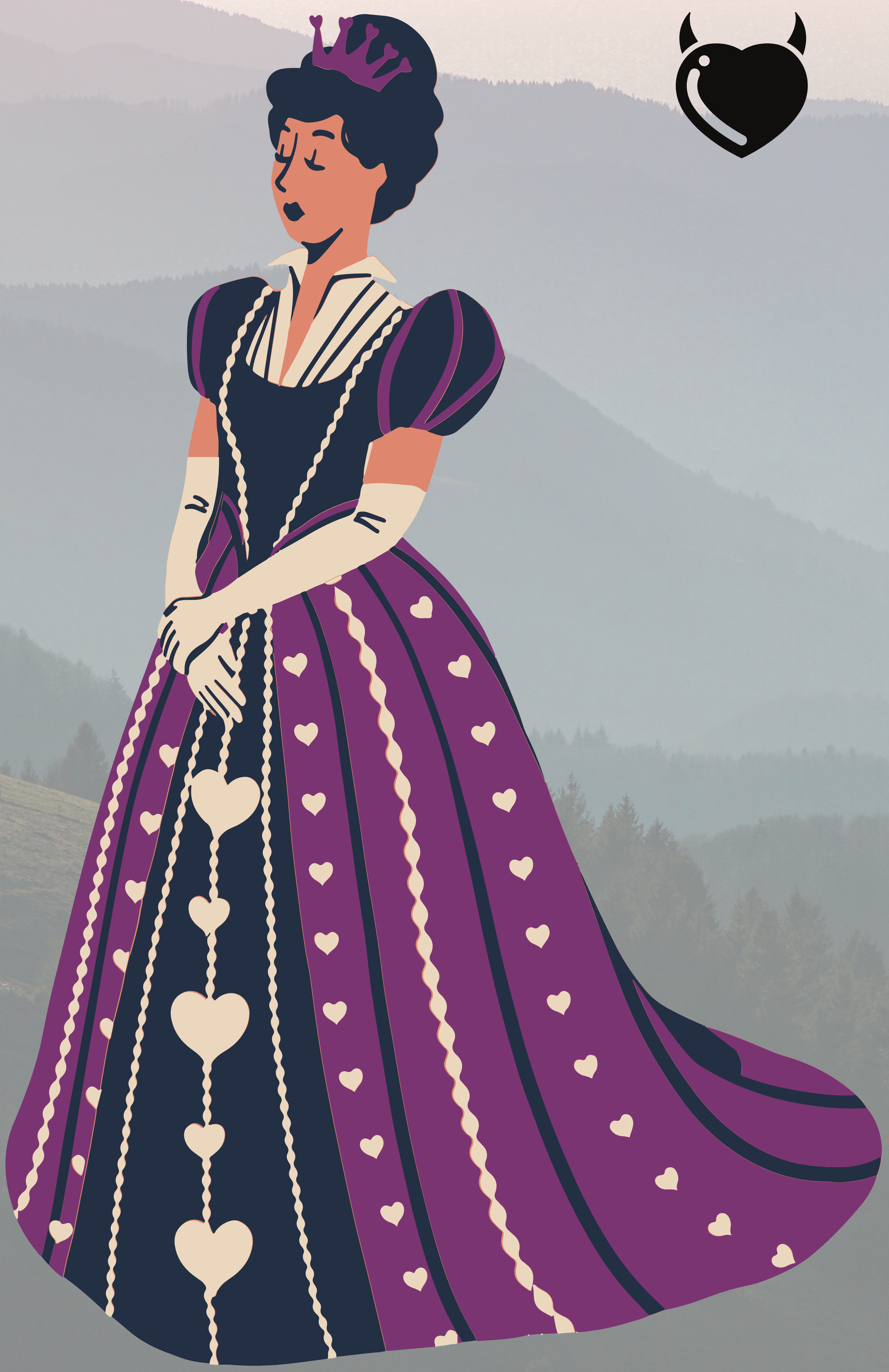
JOHN CARLO G. SAPORNA



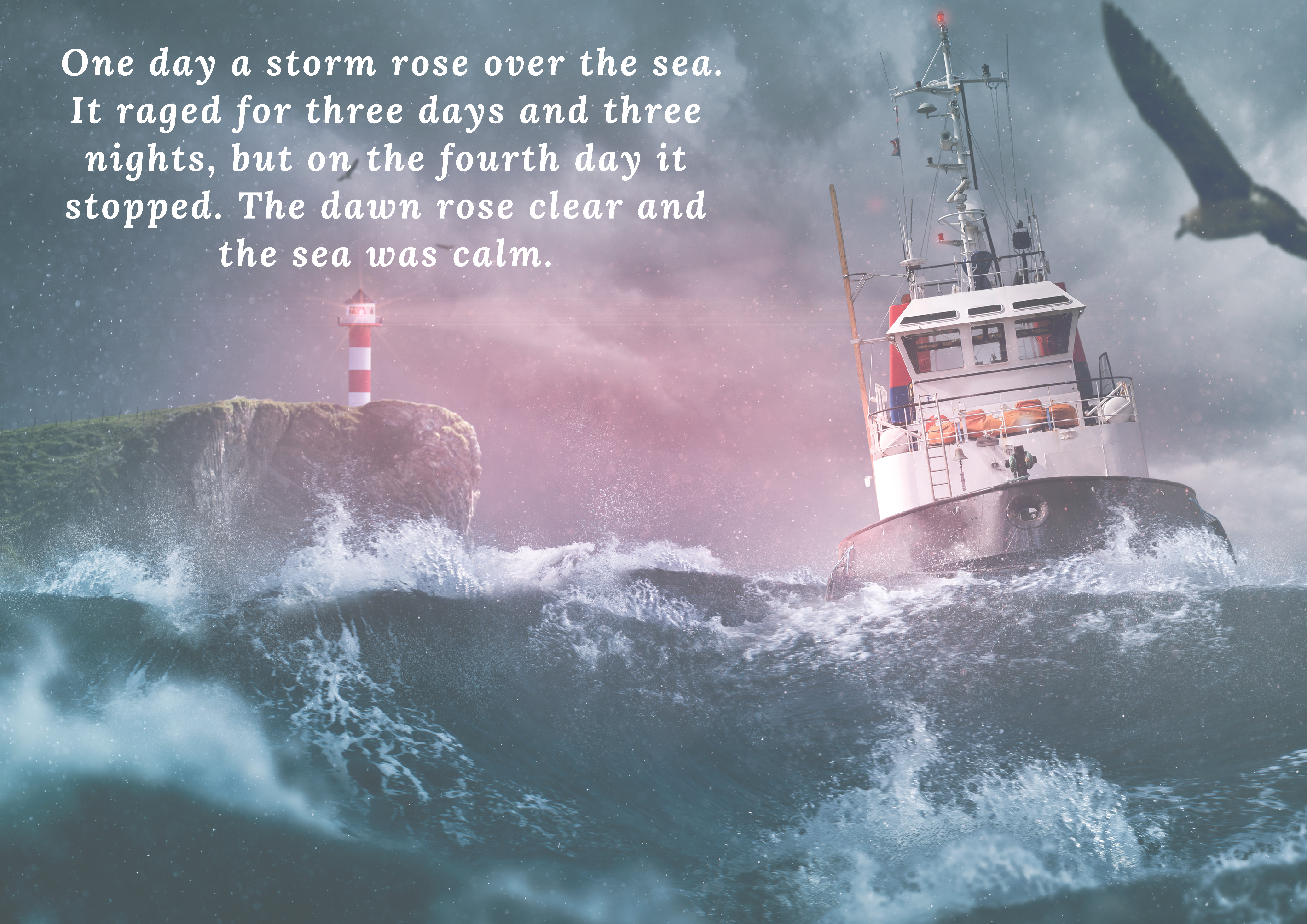


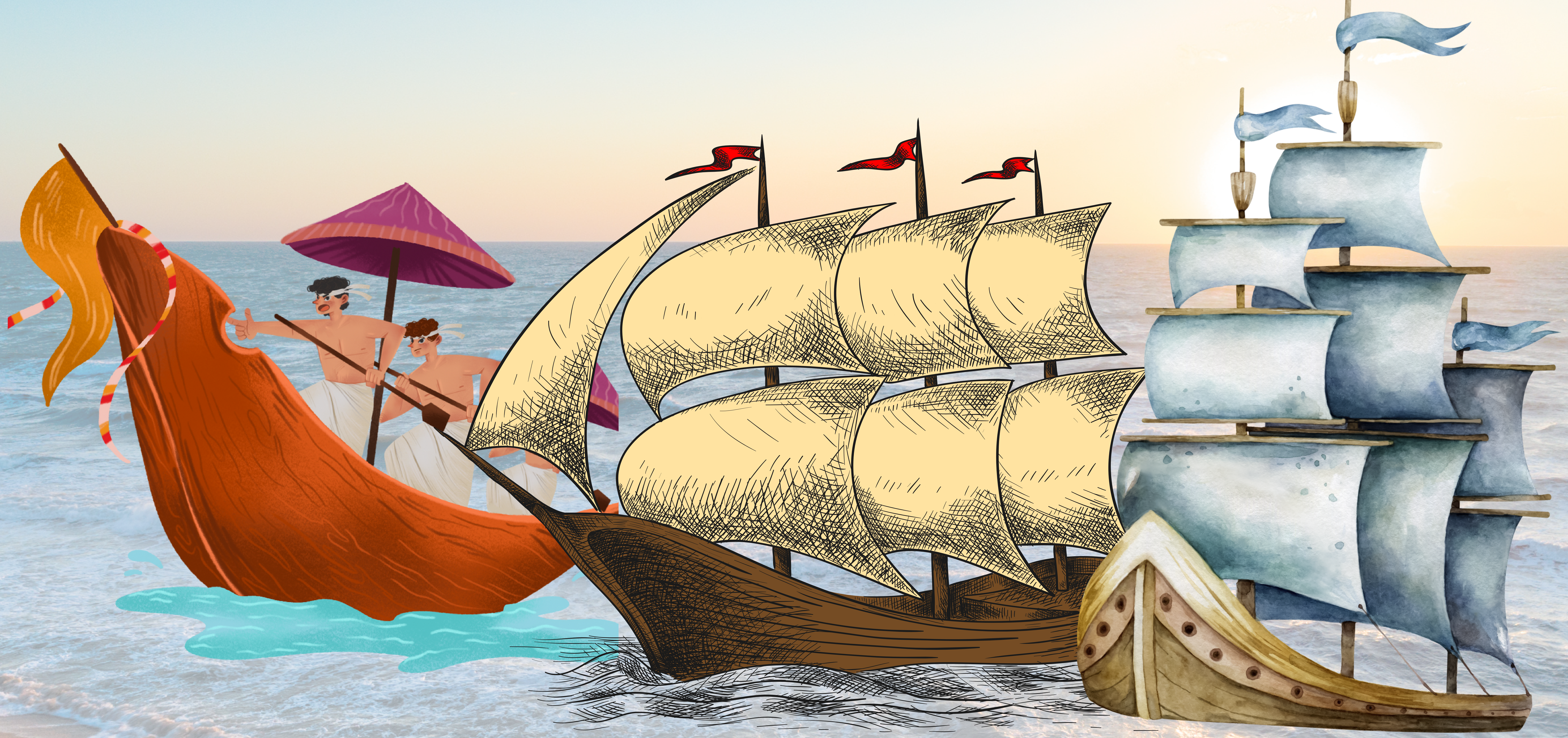
There once was a queen who lived in the island kingdom of Marinduque, in the southeastern tip of Luzon. Her beauty was famous, but few dared to know her. Her eyes were cold as diamonds set in steel, and her lips were frozen in a hard straight line. Her name was Maria Malindig and she was a wicked ruler.

When anyone displeased her she had him killed. All her subjects were terrified of her. Everyone said she was evil. Few realized that she was wicked simply because she had no one to love.

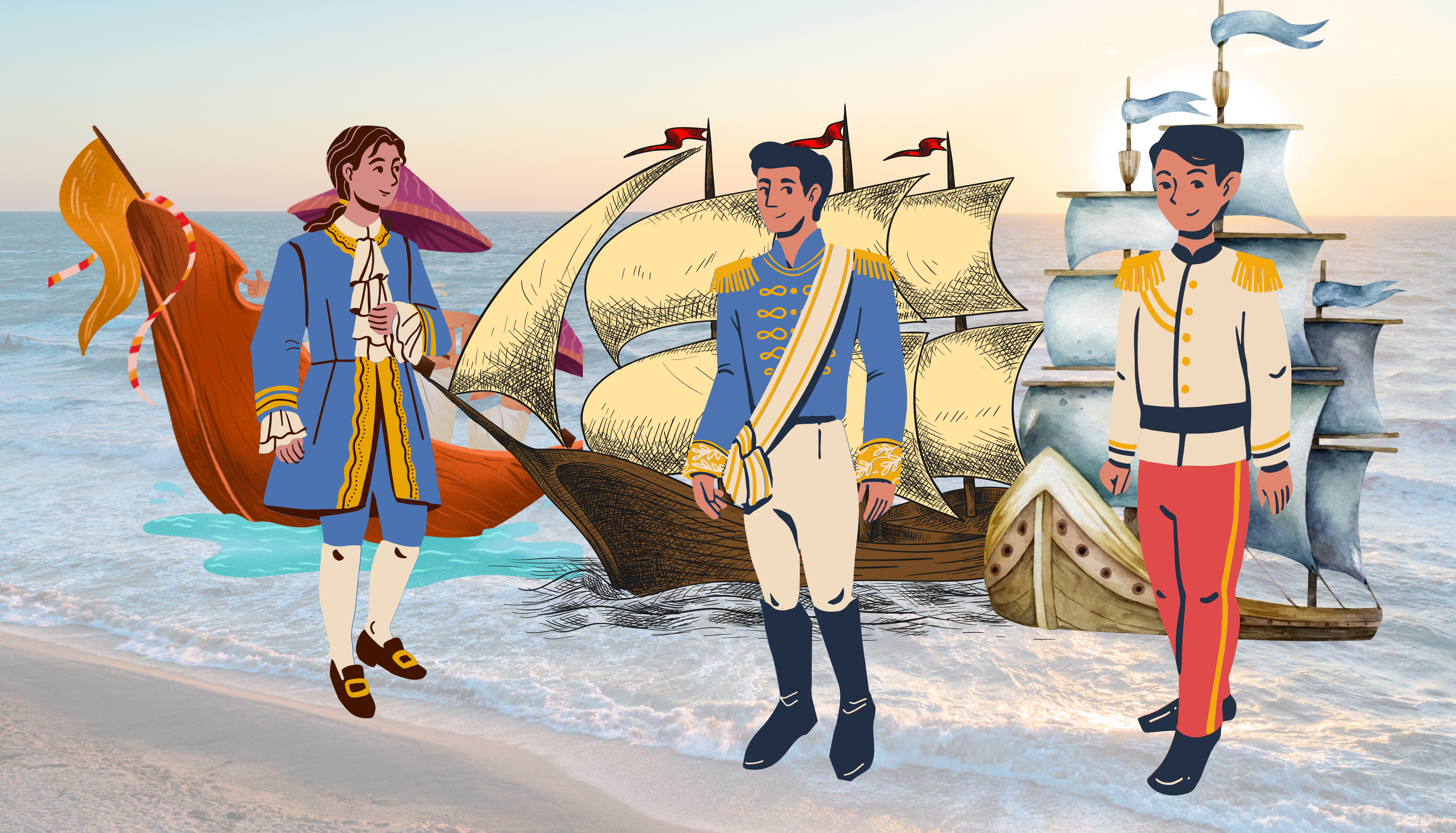


One day a storm rose over the sea. It raged for three days and three nights, but on the fourth day it stopped. The dawn rose clear and the sea was calm.



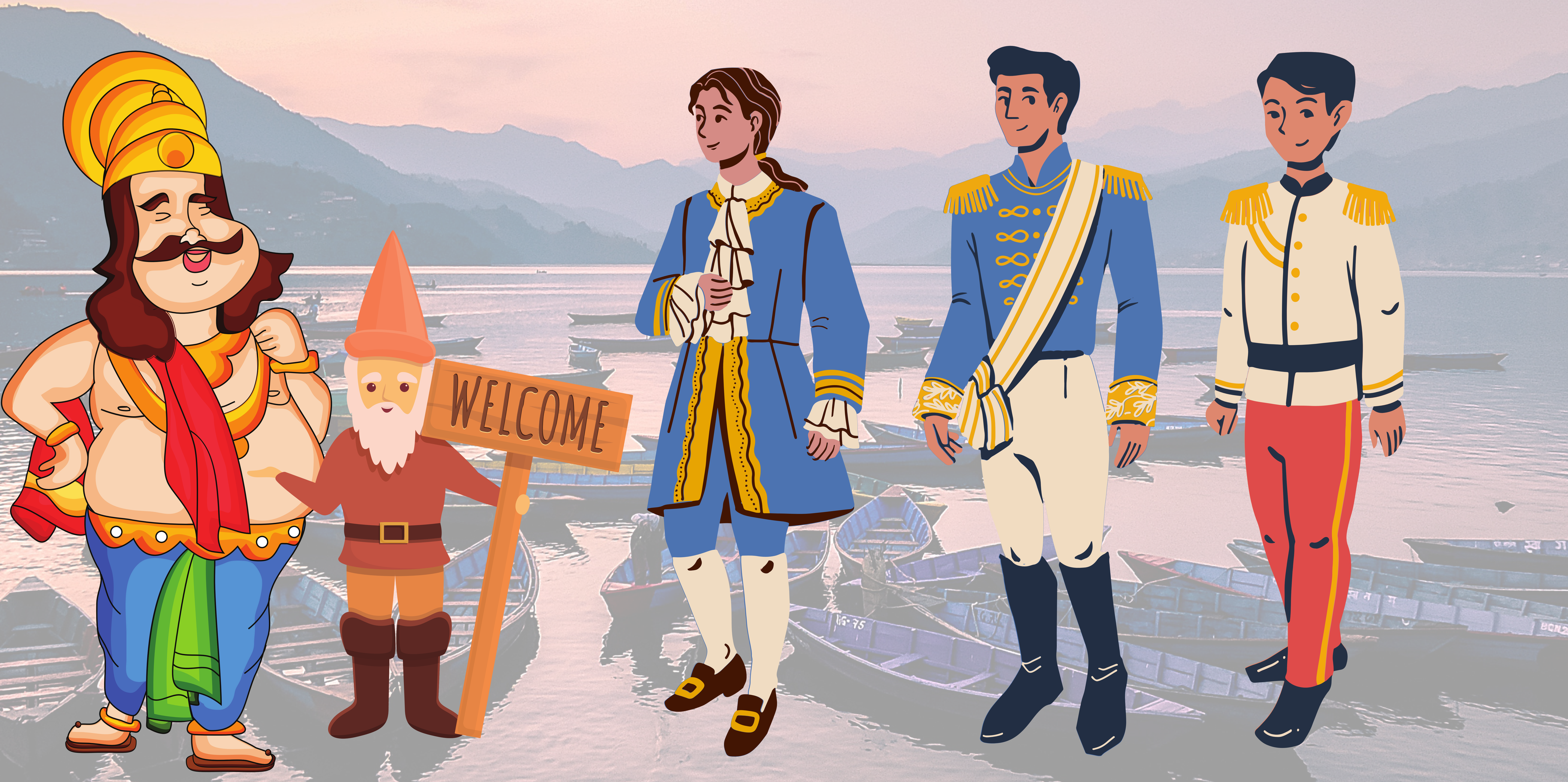


When the people looked out onto the bay, they saw three huge ships with majestic white sails and many colored flags flapping in the wind. In the palace Maria Malindig and her royal council watched the ships with great interest. Were they enemy ships? Or were they friendly ships seeking shelter from the storm? They watched as a small boat was lowered from each of the three ships.

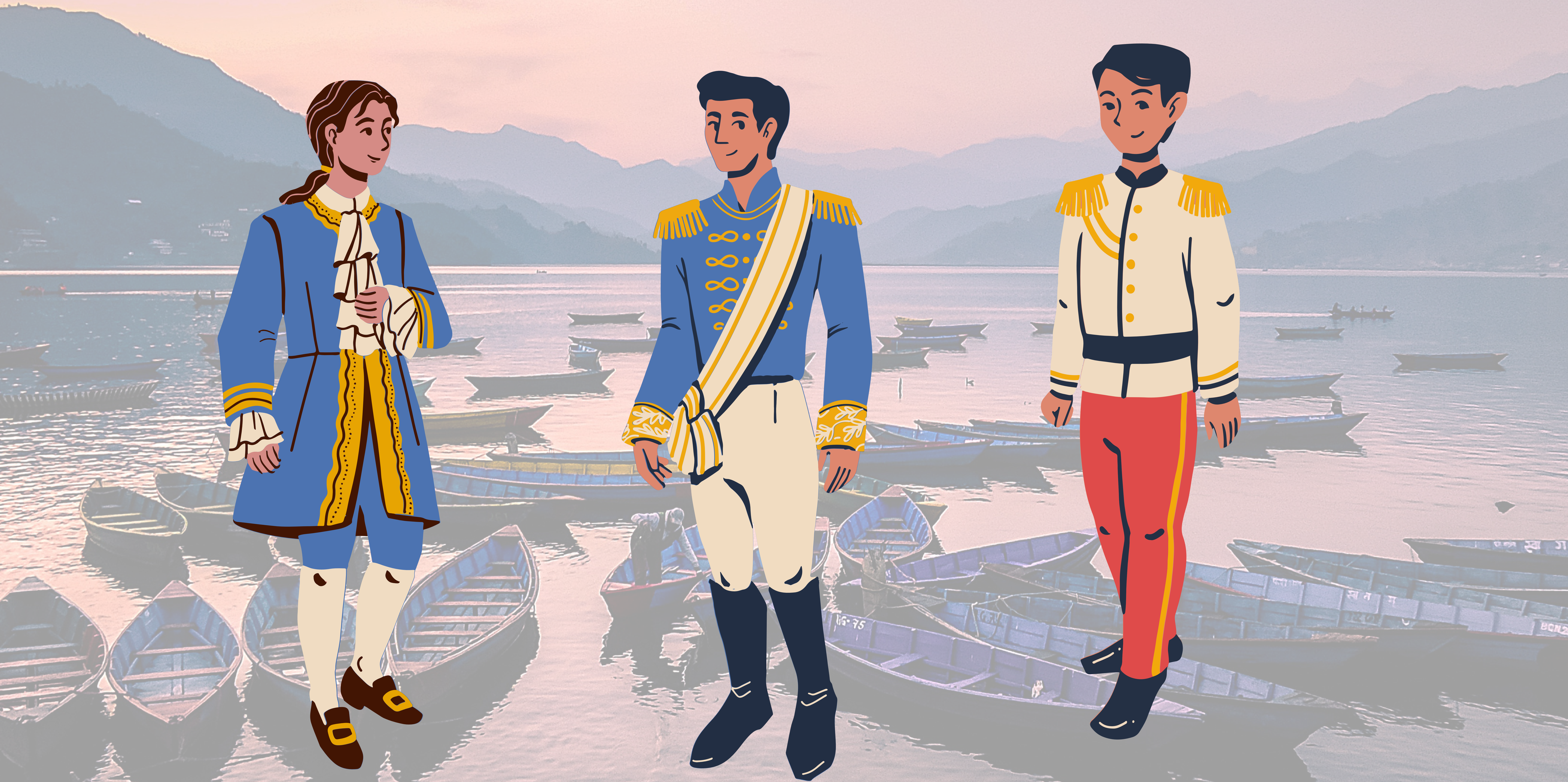


The boats were rowed by several men. In the middle of each boat stood a man, dressed in robes so rich they reflected the sun and dazzled the eyes of all those watching.

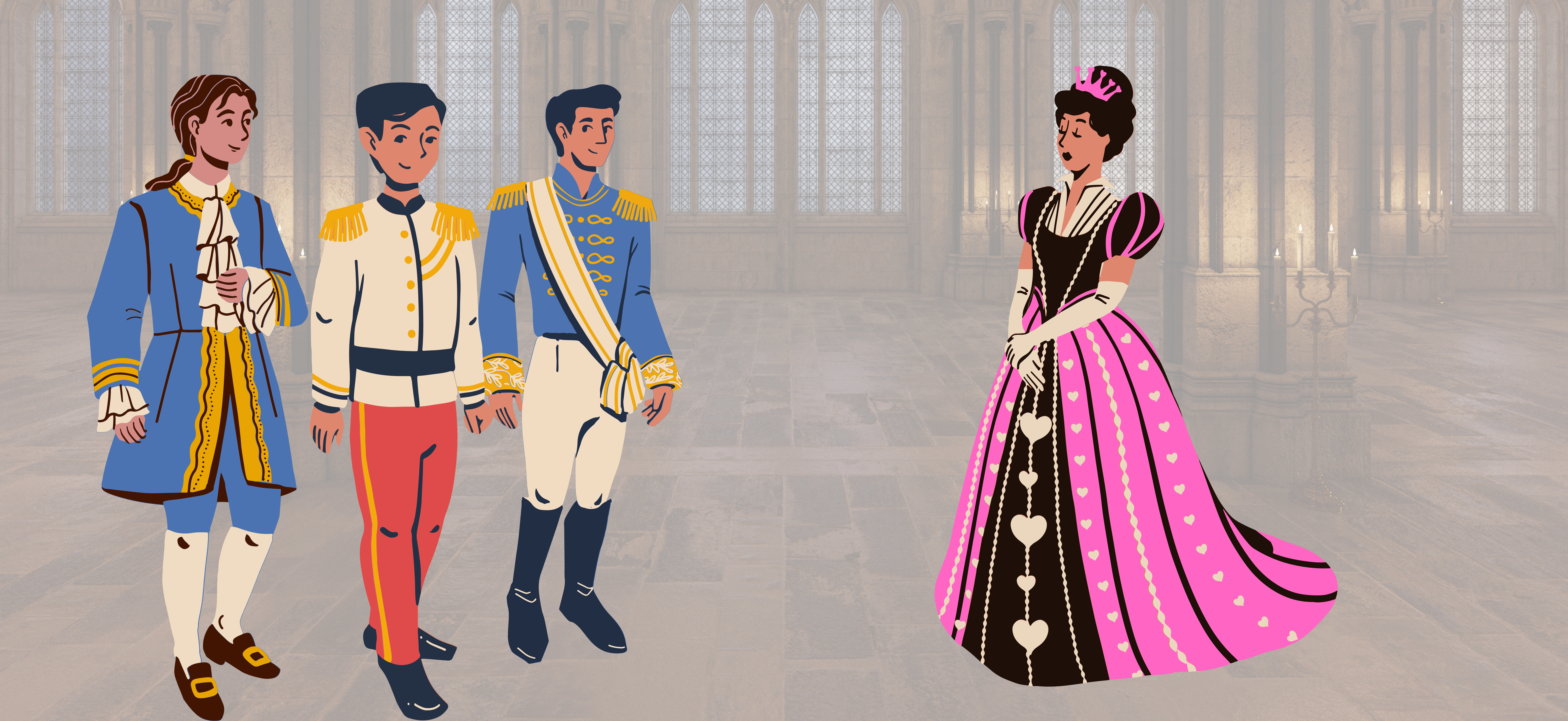
The queen sent her chief minister down to the shore to meet the boats. The minister bowed to each of the three men and said: “We of Marinduque welcome you to our land. We would like to greet our visitors with a proper welcome, but it is difficult to do so without knowing who you are.



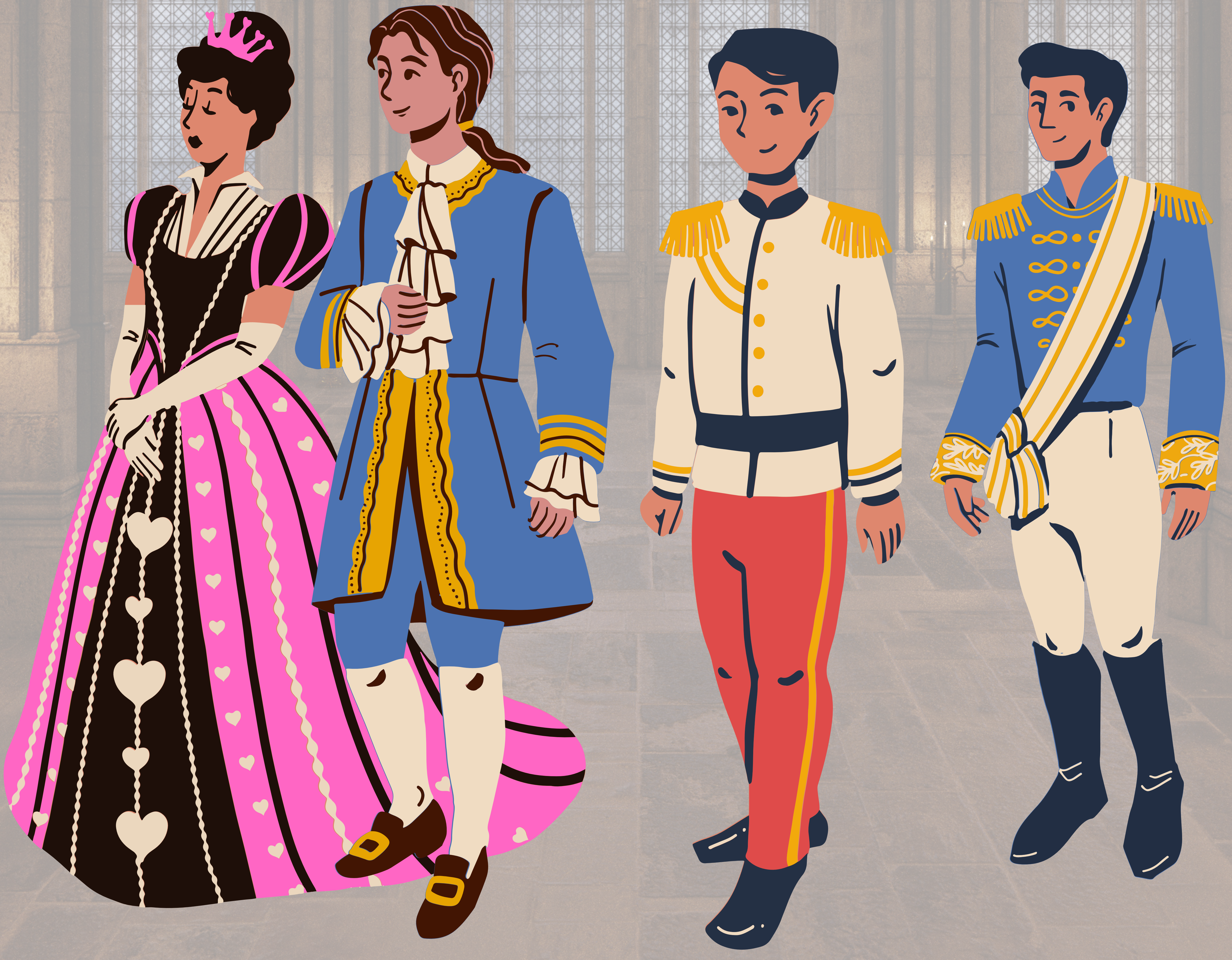
The eldest of the three men came forward and replied, “I am Laki , king of the eastern provinces of the Empire of Mu.” He gestured graciously. “These are my companions. King Man- nga and King Pangikog .” Both men bowed. King Laki continued: “We followed the sun and crossed a hundred seas to find a kingdom ruled by a queen whose beauty is known far and wide. The storm drove us to your seas, but now we know that this is the kingdom we seek. We have come in the hope that one of us might win her hand in marriage.”



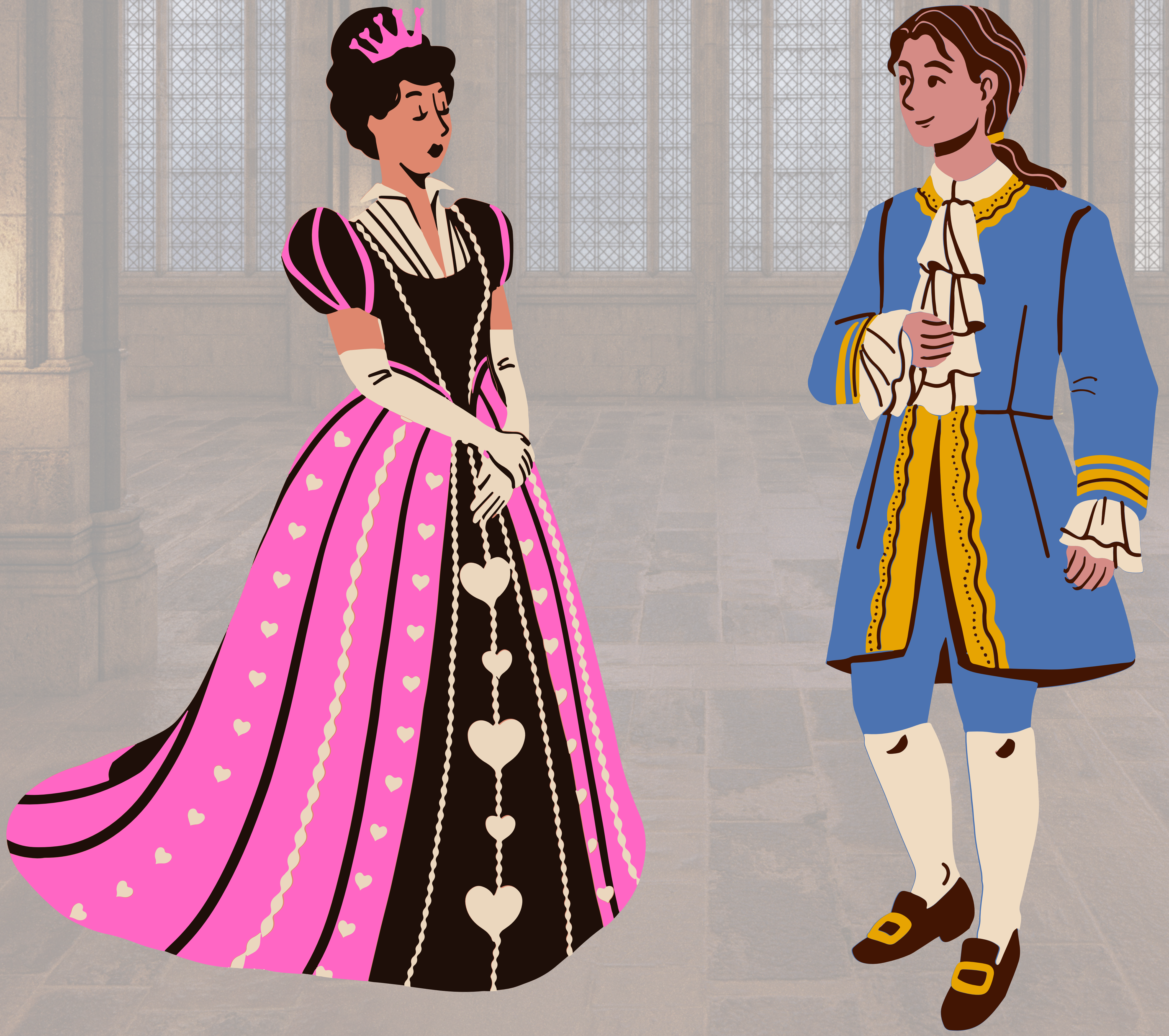
The chief minister asked them to follow him. Together they made a long procession to the palace-the minister, the kings, and the kings’ servants, bearing gifts for the beautiful but mysterious queen.When the kings entered the palace they were struck dumb by the beauty of Maria Malindig. The queen herself quickly glanced at the visitors with a practiced eye.



In a minute she had looked them over. The first, King Laki, looked like an old gentleman. He had a loose lower lip that flapped when he talked. The second, King Man-nga, was good-looking but very short. The third and youngest king was Pangikog. He was tall and handsome, and the queen wanted to know him better.



When King Laki told her why they had come, Maria Malindig’s cold heart let in a warm ray of hope. But she asked a lot of questions, for she was suspicious and did not trust easily. When her questions were answered, she said: “I know now that you are sincere, and I am honored. I have ruled my kingdom for many years. I welcome your gracious offer to share my burden…” Her voice became weaker, and for the first time in her life she was unsure. But she was a woman used to making choices, so she made up her mind quickly. “I choose Pangikog .”



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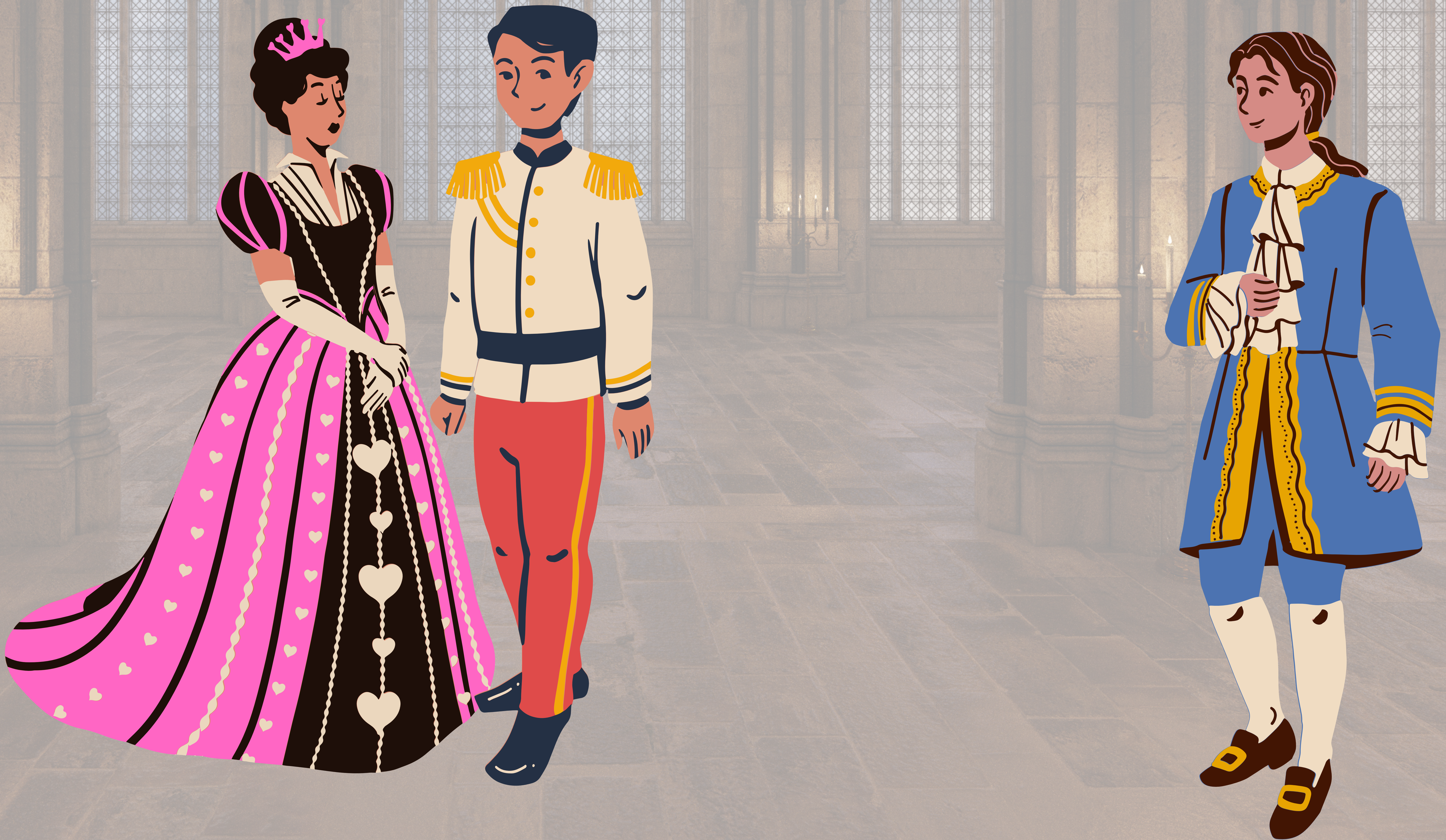
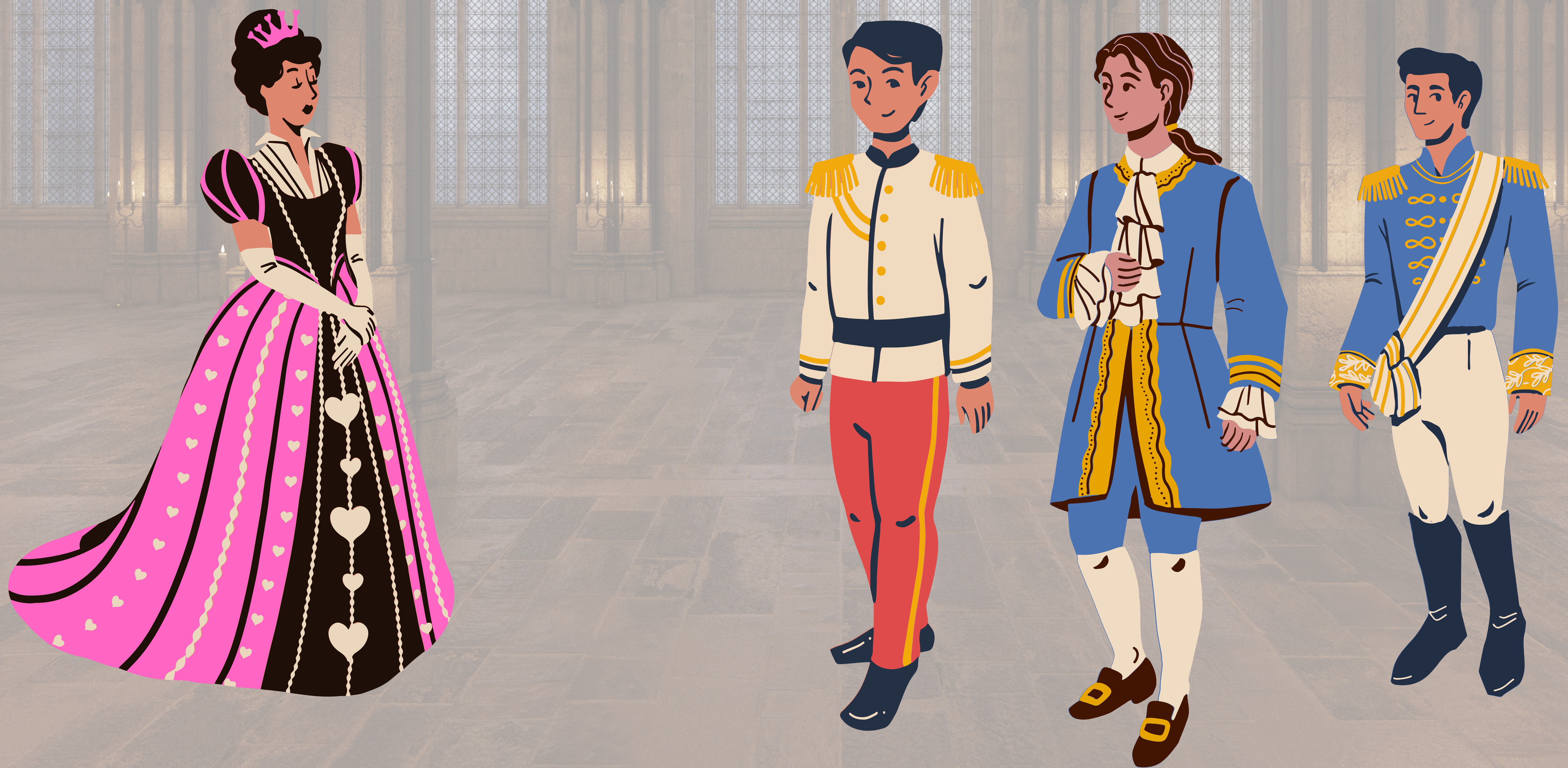
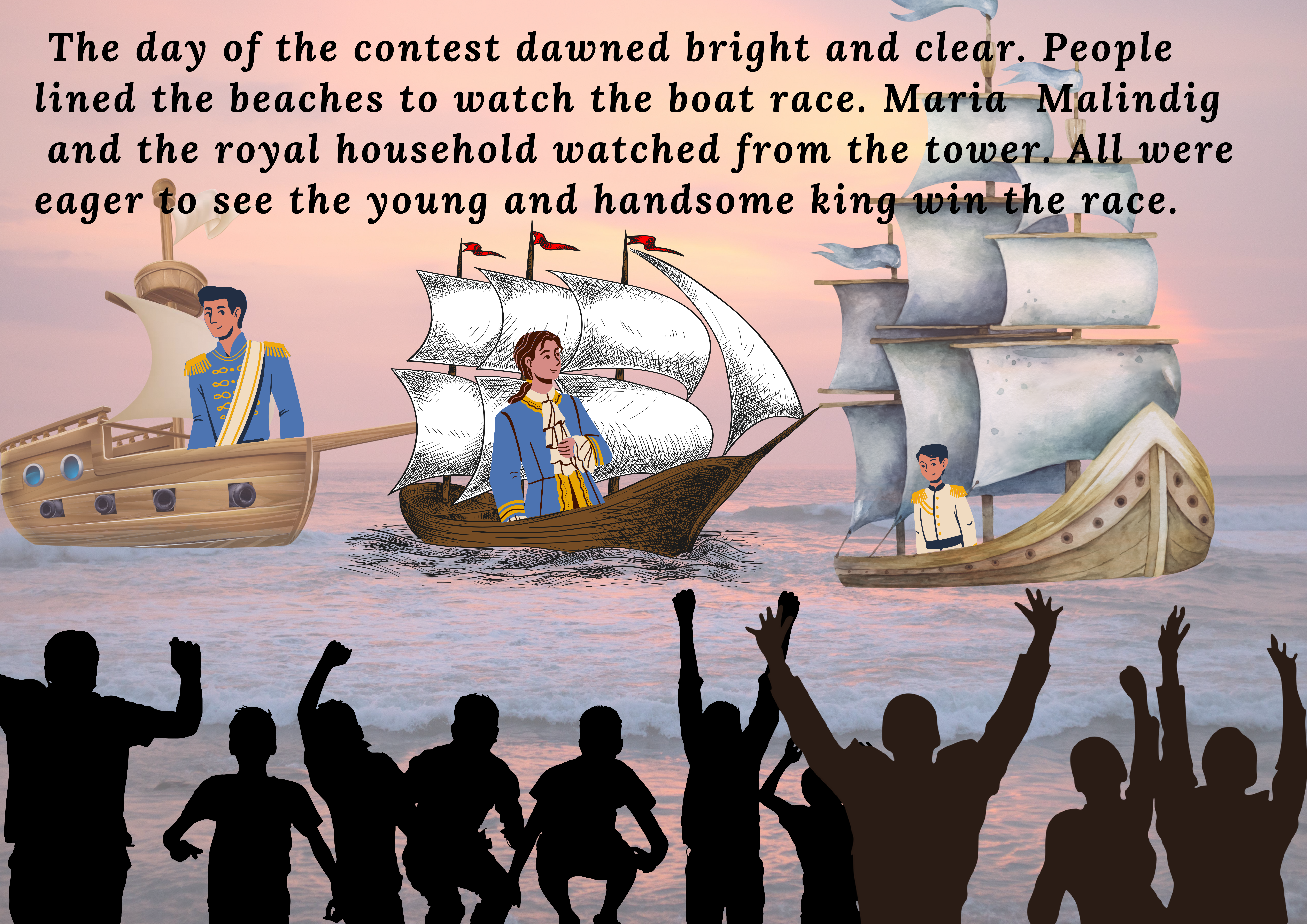


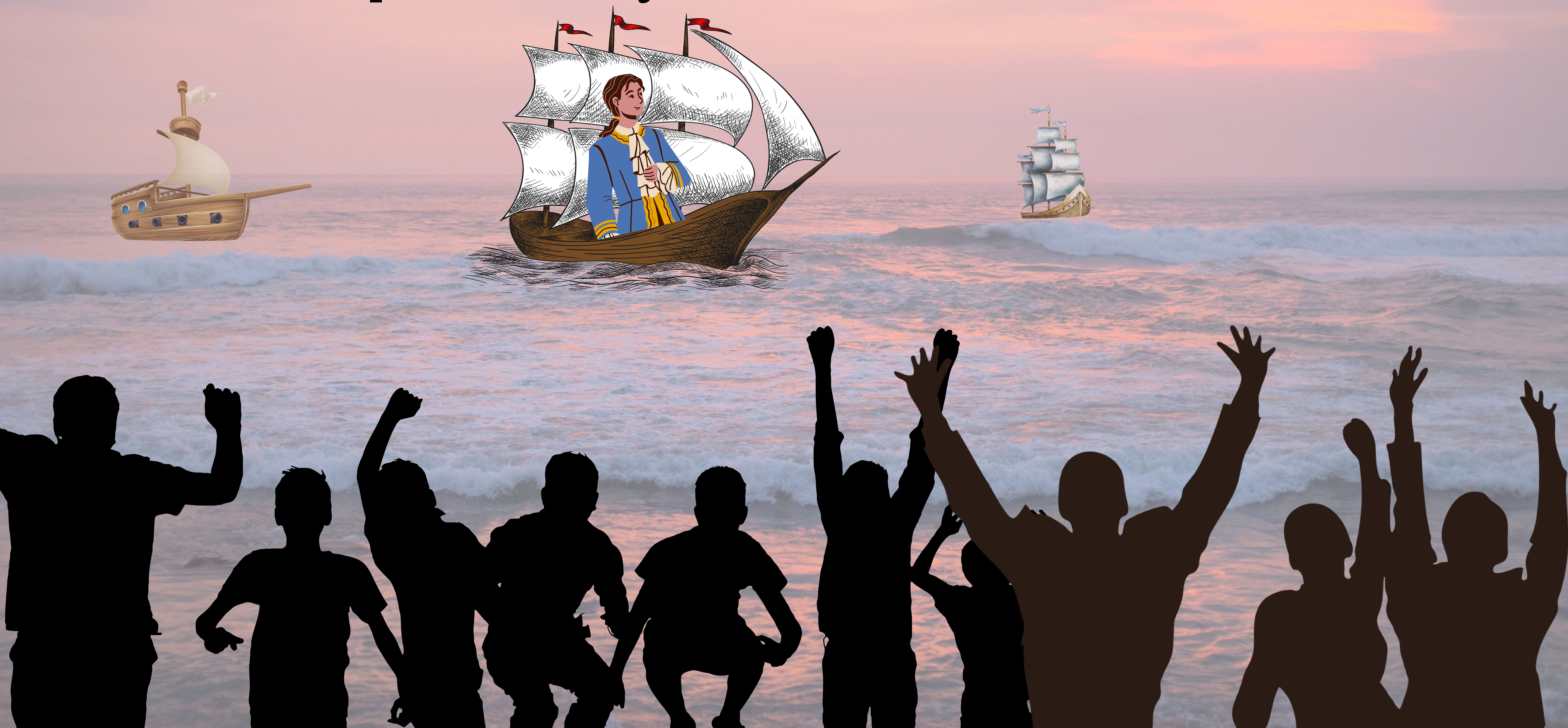
The kings sprang to their feet. “Your Majesty,” King Laki said quickly, “It is our custom that a king marryonly the woman he has won in a contest of skill. We cannot disobey the law.” “In my kingdom,” said Maria Malindig icily, “my word is law.” Then King Pangikogspoke: “I am deeply honored, your Majesty, but I cannot go against the customs of my people. The matter must be decided with a contest, else I must return to my kingdom alone.” “Very well, then,” said the queen. “We shall have a contest. The king that sails his ship the fastest wins my hand.”



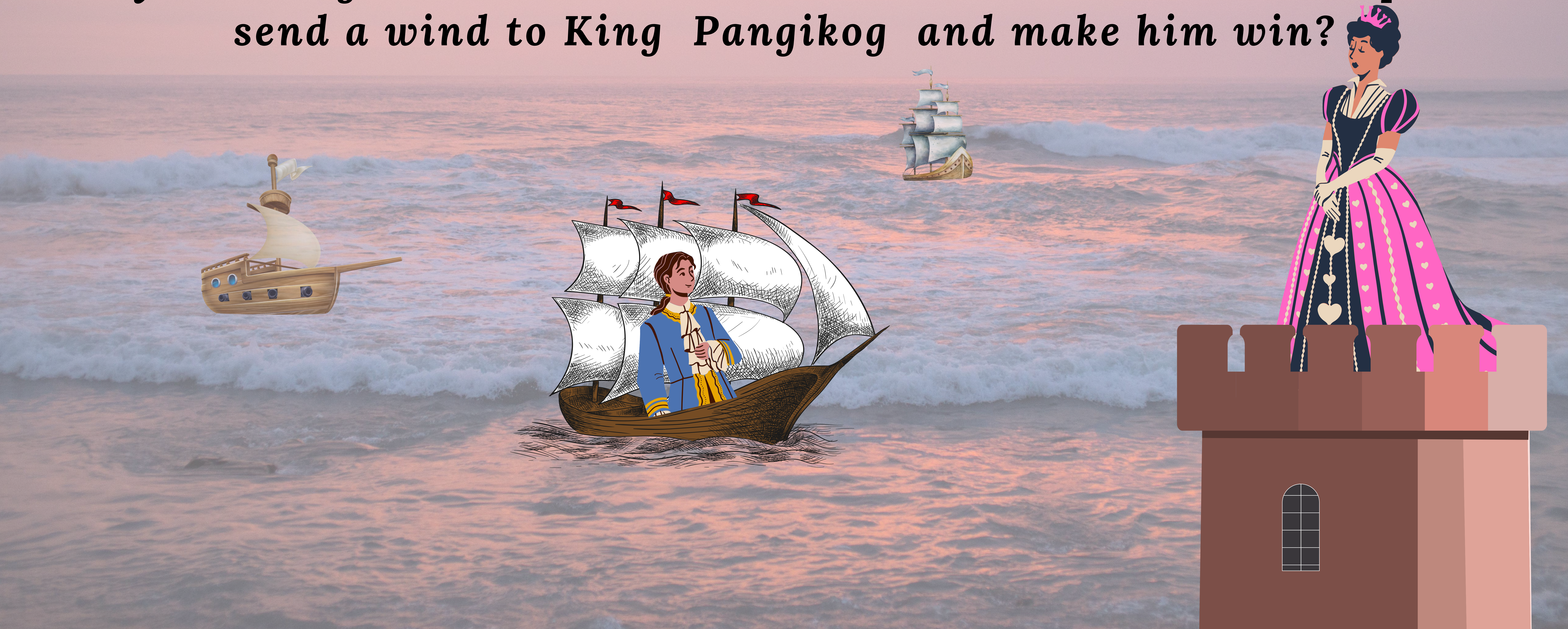
The day of the contest dawned bright and clear. People lined the beaches to watch the boat race. Maria Malindig and the royal household watched from the tower. All were eager to see the young and handsome king win the race.



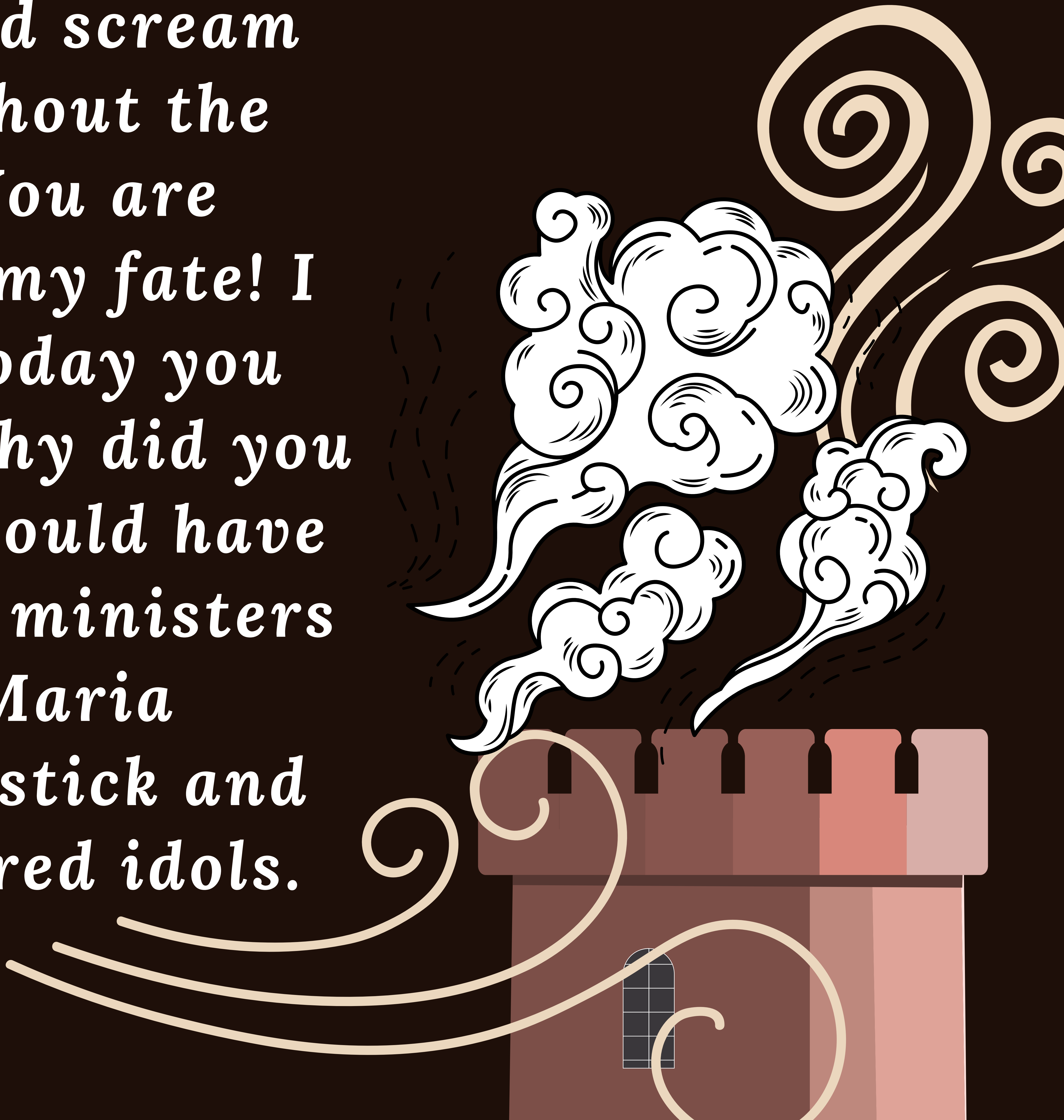
Soon the white sails could be seen. The people waited for the ships to come closer so that they could see who was ahead. Maria Malindig did not take her sharp eyes from the sea, and she knew before anyone else that King Laki was leading, followed by King Man- nga . King Pangikog's ship was last, far behind the other two.



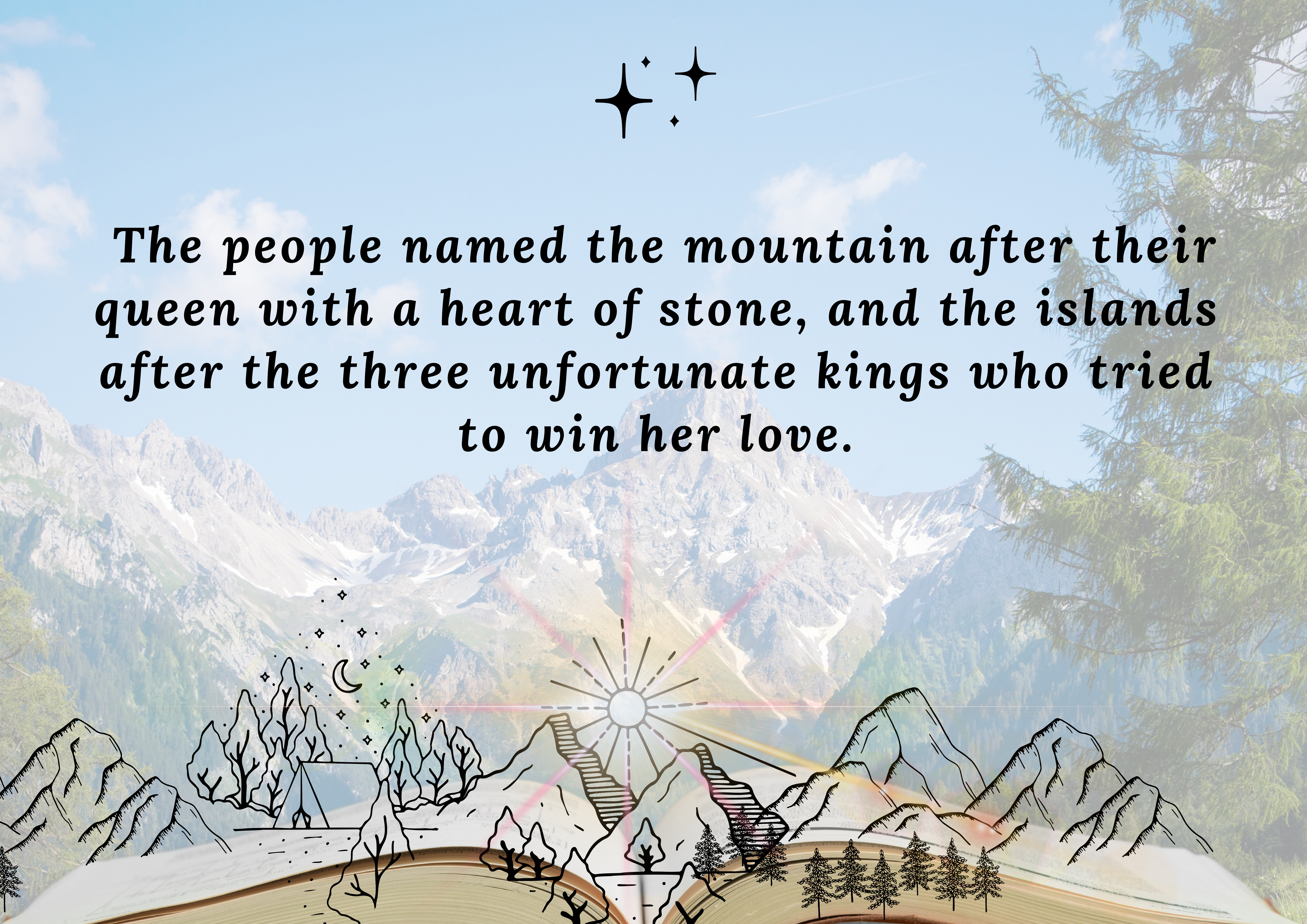
Maria Malindig's heart sank in despair, but soon she became angry. How could Pangikog lose? Something as simple as sailing a ship... the man had to be a fool not to win the race! She became angrier still when she thought of how she, the fairest of queens, did not deserve a husband as old as King Laki . She brooded, and the more she brooded, the more her eyes flashed with hate. Quickly she left the tower. The ministers followed her to the temple of the gods. They were eager to see what she would do. Would she cast a spell to send a wind to King Pangikog and make him win?



But Maria Malindig had forgotten her spells in her anger. When she reached the temple, she screamed a high-pitched scream that was heard throughout the palace. “Worthless! You are worthless guardians of my fate! I long for warmth, but today you deny me that warmth! Why did you deny him victory? He should have been mine!” And as her ministers watched in horror, Maria Malindig took a candlestick and struck down all the sacred idols.



In an hour the fury died down. The sun shone again and the skies were clear. The sea was calm. Everything was as it had been, except for Maria Malindig's palace. It had disappeared, and in its place a mountain had risen. The new mountain faced the bay, looking just like Maria Malindig had looked as she watched the race-proud and majestic. The ships, too, were gone. In their place were three small islands.



The people named the mountain after their queen with a heart of stone, and the islands after the three unfortunate kings who tried to win her love.